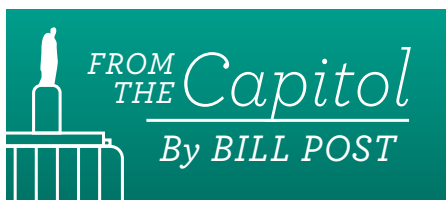


Editorial Cartoon

A session begins



It's been quite some time since my last column, mainly due to elections and the start of the 2021 legislative session. I want to acknowledge right away, thank you to publisher Lyndon Zaitz for allowing me to write this.

I'd like to relay where my own bills are so far this session. This Friday, March 19, is the First Chamber deadline. That means a bill must be scheduled for a work session (that's when the committee votes on the bill) by March 19 from the House or Senate Chamber of origination. If a bill doesn't have a scheduled work session then it's "dead" unless it's in the Committee on Rules, Revenue, or a Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

I've been fortunate to have several bills move out of committee or that should move later this week. HB 2607 which will help those who lost their homes in last year's wildfires by exempting them from construction taxes, is now awaiting Third Reading (voting by the House as a whole). HB 2650, which a constituent brought to me, would allow a police dog or K9 to be transported for treatment by an ambulance. That is also awaiting a vote of the House floor. HB 3047 which would prohibit "doxing" is on its way to the House floor. HB 3239 which would prohibit large cannabis processing plants in certain areas is having a public hearing and work session later this month. HB 2644 and HJM 2 both honor some very special veterans. Those veterans were the ones who cleaned up the atomic waste in the Enewetak Atoll after the nuclear bombs were tested earlier in the 1950s and '60s. Those two bills have a hearing later this month.

Finally, HB 2648, my attempt again to make "Sudafed" type products sold

behind the counter with an ID and not require a prescription. Mississippi just passed the exact same bill as what I am proposing, making Oregon the only state in America that requires a prescription for a common cold medicine. That bill will have a hearing and work session later this month.

The 2021 session has begun very strangely. All committee hearings are done remotely via Microsoft Teams. That has been a challenge.

There are many instances of people not being able to testify because they couldn't get "in" or the phone number was given incorrectly or for other reasons. There are also timeline considerations with this virtual setting. Due to technical constraints, most committees must end at a set time, meaning people who want to testify and get "in," are left "off." I had one committee that had over 50 people waiting to testify that weren't able to as time ran out.

It's no secret to those who know me that I am less than satisfied with this system. We must get the Capitol back open, because the voice of Oregonians is not being heard. Though when there are no glitches it is actually easier for people to testify, it still isn't the best way. It's a great addition, but it will never replace the actual in person testimony of Oregonians. I hope by the next column things will be different.

(Bill Post represents House District 25. He can be reached at 503-986-1425 or via email at rep.billpost@oregonlegislature.gov)

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